

## For Immediate Release

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### **Employment Security Assists Jobless Workers Affected by End of Temporary Unemployment Program**

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Employment Security Department is assisting 44,000 jobless workers who face the immediate loss of temporary federal unemployment benefits in January by moving most of them into available alternative benefit programs and encouraging others to continue to file for benefits.

The unemployed workers currently receive Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation (TEUC) benefits. That program, approved earlier this year by Congress and the President, ends Dec. 28 in all states. Because there are some indications Congress may act in January to reauthorize the program, Employment Security officials are emphasizing that all affected unemployed workers should continue to file claims. Congress could decide to cover the period between the expiration of the program and its reauthorization.

“We can’t say that Congress will reauthorize this program, but there is a reasonable chance,” said Employment Security Commissioner Sylvia P. Mundy. “If that happens, these unemployed workers may get paid for the weeks between the expiration of the program and its reauthorization, and they will get paid more quickly if they continue to file claims. Governor Locke has been very clear in asking us to do everything we can to make sure unemployed workers continue to file.”

The department estimates that all but about 1,300 of the unemployed workers will transition without a break in payment from TEUC into other benefit programs. Employment Security is mailing letters this week to claimants affected by the change.

Failure to reauthorize the program would significantly reduce benefits for a far greater number of unemployed workers. The state’s regular unemployment insurance program provides up to 30 weeks of benefits. Without the TEUC program, the maximum time a Washington resident can receive unemployment beyond that regular program will be reduced by 26 weeks – about six months. Most TEUC recipients in Washington will receive about nine weeks of benefits after Dec. 28 through a separate state-federal program known as Extended Benefits.

Those who are potentially eligible for Extended Benefits will receive applications this week in the mail. Claimants must return those applications to their Unemployment Claims TeleCenter by Jan 3. If eligible, they will be paid Extended Benefits.

“It is critical the applications be promptly completed and returned so that payments will continue,” said Jerry Iyall, of Employment Security’s Unemployment Insurance Division. He said claimants should continue to file weekly claims, even if they have not yet been told that they are eligible for Extended Benefits.

About 1,300 people who do not qualify for Extended Benefits will stop receiving unemployment checks in early January. However, they are being asked to continue to file until further notice.

Extended Benefits became available in Washington a year ago as a result of the state’s sharply increased unemployment rate. While that program can end abruptly, it would require a significant drop in the state’s unemployment rate. Unless Congress reauthorizes TEUC when it reconvenes in January, the

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department estimates that about 28,000 to 38,000 unemployed workers will exhaust all benefits during the first three months of 2003.

By the end of this year, close to \$600 million in TEUC benefits will have been paid to unemployed workers in Washington since the program began in March. About half that amount, \$250 to \$300 million, in Extended Benefits is expected to be paid during the next year to Washington claimants.

The state's WorkSource centers provide resources to help people in their search for work. For locations and a searchable job database, see the WorkSource Web site at <http://go2worksource.com>. For more information about Extended Benefits, visit <http://go2ui.com>.

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**News Media:** More information about TEUC and Extended Benefits will be available on the News & Publications section of Employment Security's Web site at <http://www.wa.gov/esd/AgencyInfo/news.html>.